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ABSTRACT

In response to a 1991 call issued by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, eight institutions were selected to participate in a model process designed to involve higher education in the economics of community development. They were: Bloomsburg University, Chadron State College, Kean College of New Jersey, Murray State University, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Shawnee State University, the State University of New York at Brockport, and Western Carolina University. The Mon Valley Tri-State Leadership Academy, a regional consortium whose mission and activities parallel those of the model process, also participated. The model process included the following steps: completion of institutional self-assessments, process design; process organization; definition of economic and community development; analysis of each institution's environment; development of goals, strategies, and initiatives; program implementation; and evaluation of program results. All eight institutions conducted self-assessments, designed a planning process that involved bringing together key institutional and community decision makers, identified problems faced by continuing educators as they attempt to expand their leadership role in economic and community development planning, and recommended actions continuing educators can take to overcome the problems identified. (Recommendations for further research, a list of institutional respondents, and a 12-item bibliography are included.) (MN)

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATORS' LEADERSHIP ROLE IN ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

RESEARCH REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

In response to a 1991 call issued by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) to participate in a Model Process designed to involve higher education in economic and community development, eight institutions were selected. This Model Process involved eight steps:

1. Performing an Institutional Self-Assessment
2. Designing the process
3. Organizing the process
4. Defining economic and community development
5. Analyzing the environment
6. Developing goals, strategies, and initiatives
7. Implementing programs
8. Evaluating the results.

Each school completed the Institutional Self-Assessment. Step Two included a visit by a two-person consulting team, one of whom was Lynn Witten, then Director of AASCU's Center for Economic and Community Development, and responding to the report and recommendations of the consulting team with a design plan for the continued development of that institution's commitment to and involvement in local economic and community development.

This report describes what has taken place at these eight colleges and universities as a result of these introductory efforts, as well as at the Mon Valley Tri-State Network, Inc., and the Mon Valley Tri-State Leadership Academy, a regional consortium whose mission and activities parallel those of the AASCU Model Process. The description of each institution summarizes the economic and community development processes and activities which have occurred subsequent to the consultation visits, identifies lessons learned as a result of the implementation of these processes and activities, and presents the researcher's conclusions about the results and effectiveness of this consultative and developmental endeavor. An introductory bibliography is attached for those who desire to improve their understanding of, and involve their schools in, local economic and community development.

BLOOMSBURG UNIVERSITY

The AASCU connection was extremely well-timed for Bloomsburg. In the previous year the university had agreed on four directions in its strategic planning process for the 1990s, one of which was a recommitment to being a more proactive regional development partner. This combination of university readiness and Bloomsburg's selection as one of the eight pilot institutions provided additional focus and impetus to that strategic direction.

The consulting report made two short-term recommendations: 1) to complete the university's first comprehensive public service directory which was then in the process of development (and which has been finished and distributed) and 2) to complete an economic impact analysis of the university on the region. AASCU pointed out a piece of inexpensive, interactive software which should be helpful in carrying out the analysis. The university's Office of Institutional Research is in the process of producing results.

The President's cabinet has committed $25,000 to completing the AASCU process. The building blocks of that process are two: an internal task force of faculty and staff and an external task force of business and community leaders in the region. In Fall, 1992, Bloomsburg responded to a request for proposals (RFP) from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania on Developing a Community Vision, a process very similar to that suggested by AASCU which had immediate value for the region. However, the proposal was not funded.

The current thinking is that Bloomsburg should modify the process to be more focused on the School of Extended Programs' role in the institution because it is looked at as the focal point for Bloomsburg University's public service activities. Extended Programs intends to take the AASCU process as the guiding model, but adapt and adopt it for the purpose of focusing on Extended Programs as the lead component of the university for regional development rather than the process to the entire university perspective.

In one respect the AASCU consulting process itself was disappointing. In preparation for the AASCU visit the university collected and provided a large amount of material about the region. The understanding was that the consulting team was to study this material and come to the campus prepared to say something about the region. That didn't happen.

What the AASCU process has done for Bloomsburg University and the School of Extended Programs is to provide a "hook" to keep momentum going. Referring to "the AASCU project" commands greater attention than just talking about "our regional development planning process"; such a reference takes the discussion one level out of the university and provides one level of greater importance among all the other entities competing for attention within the university. External credibility and impetus is provided when referring to "the AASCU process."

What has Bloomsburg University learned? 1) There are many models for planning. Among all these models are certain common elements. Recognizing both the range of possibilities and the commonalities helps determine what seems to make the most sense at this time and then do it. 2) Having an external "hook" is important and useful in providing credibility and gaining peoples' attention while planning, an activity which is not really exciting for a lot of people. Planning is future oriented and does not provide the immediate satisfaction of a task accomplished. The AASCU process helps maintain focus on the planning process when other things compete for attention. 3) Although the director has had an interest in planning for a long time, providing leadership in the process causes him to learn more than he would if he were a follower.

While there has been respectable attention given to outreach and public service activities, initiating the process with AASCU has provided the opportunity to take an inward look and to respond to changing circumstances both inside and outside the university. There can be a broadening and contextualizing of activities by the university. Yet, at the same time, if the School of Extended Programs should disappear tomorrow, the institution, in actuality if not philosophically, would still go its way. Continuing education and outreach activities, including attention to non-traditional students and economic and community development efforts, are still somewhat marginal activities.

CHADRON STATE COLLEGE

The local efforts at Chadron, the only four-year institution of higher education in the western half of Nebraska, piggyback on the economic development initiatives of the state and help assure that businesses and industry in its service region participate in what is happening at the state level. It is within this framework that the positive results of the AASCU process at Chadron are best understood. 1) By bringing together community and institutional leaders, the two-day process helped increase awareness of the college by the community, and vice versa. In particular, college leaders heard what the community thought the institutions could be doing to better serve the community. 2) The meetings gave people both within the college and in the region an awareness of what the office of Economic Development Activities at the college was actually doing.

On the negative side, the process was time consuming, and the time frame for continuing the process did not conform to other internal concerns. In addition, because it serves a relatively small population spread over a huge geographic area, the college saw the cost of continuing as a major deterrent. The administration also became concerned when AASCU discontinued its Center for Economic and Community Development. Consequently, Chadron participated in only the first two steps and chose not to develop a design plan.

This being said, it is necessary to point out that Chadron perceives itself, and will continue, to be a major player in the community and economic development of its region. Chadron is an active participant in the Nebraska Development Network, a voluntary association of community leaders and economic and human service providers, and facilitates the Greater Northwest Nebraska Network Group. The office of Economic Development Activities provides a wide variety of direct and indirect support services by, for example, helping put together resource teams to help communities with strategic planning and coordinating within the region the Community Rural Revitalization

program, designed for communities of 500 or less, and the Strategic Training and Resource Targeting (START), sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Omaha, the State Department of Economic Development, and corporations and designed for communities of 1200 to 1500 and upward.

The three colleges in the state college system, of which Chadron is a part, have placed a high priority on economic and community development by offering community assessment, community leadership development, quality of life enhancements, information access through electronic databases, and telecommunications connectivity. The system has been developing a sophisticated telecommunications educational delivery system of interactive video conferencing which can provide business assistance through the Small Business Development Center, continuing education for employee training, and seminars, workshops, and forums.

The coordinator offers three observations concerning the value of becoming involved in processes such as that sponsored by AASCU: 1) The academic community can genuinely benefit from understanding its impact on its region by creating greater empathy for its service region and by relating educational offerings to community needs. This can be done by training people for the jobs that are available and by assisting in creating jobs for the people it trains. 2) If institutions were to go through the entire AASCU process, doing both external and internal assessments, such activity might compel the institutions to rethink what they are doing and what they are <u>not</u> doing. It could be an uncomfortable, but necessary, process. The colleges might need to change paradigms in order to meet public perceptions and expectations. They would need to learn to think of themselves as regional, not residential, institutions. 3) Much of what is already present in the institutions could be showcased as enhancing economic development and providing service to the community, even though such programs and activities may not currently be perceived that way.

The original perception of the AASCU process at Chadron was that it would serve as strategic planning for the office of Economic Development Activities rather than as an institutional planning process. The process has moved the role of that office into much more of a regional effort. The thrust of the office is to provide service to the region.

KEAN COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Kean College's involvement with AASCU began before the final development of the document spelling out the Model Process. A team of six persons--three from the college and three from community associations and Union County--attended the AASCU Conference on Economic Development in Baltimore. Kean was very interested in using the process as a way of finding its niche in the community.

Completing the self-study helped the college think systematically in terms of seeing where they were at the time of the self-assessment as compared to where it had been previously. Although there was difficulty in arranging a suitable time for the on-campus meeting, the consultation process was indirectly beneficial. It helped the college think through several questions: Who would be the best people to invite? How can the college best reach out to the community? The presence of outside consultants to structure the discussion and the external funding were both helpful in facilitating the process. The ultimate benefits of the meeting are not as clear; the people present already knew what would come out of the session. Possibly the positive element was getting this information down in a written, organized fashion.

It is unlikely that Kean College would have continued to use the AASCU process and resources, even if the Office of Economic and Community Development had not been closed down. 1) The report stemming from the consultation did not suggest much beyond what the participants already knew. 2) There were reservations about the Model Process being too complex and process-oriented; after expending considerable energy, the college would still be no closer to actually advancing its role as a player in economic development and addressing workforce issues. 3) Then there was the matter of money--the expense of continuing was too much. In fact, concerns about cost were present early on, even before the consultation process.

Given its interest--already present before the AASCU process became available--in addressing the economic and workforce issues in its service area, Kean has continued its involvement in economic development by using other models. It has applied to the State Department of Higher Education for seed money to bring people together in a network which is less structured than that suggested by AASCU. The Union County Alliance is emerging as the vehicle which will pull the county, which is at the bottom of the state in economic indicators, together and articulate a unified approach to addressing its needs and planning its strategies. The Alliance has made the college more visible and has established healthy ties between the college and the community and between the president and community leaders. Although the AASCU consultation did initiate the process, help in catalyzing action, and provide coherence and centrality at the college to meeting and planning with all parties in the county, its overall influence has been indirect.

The lessons learned in the process are these: Before deciding on specific community, economic, and workforce activities, the educational institution needs to pull together key players in the region and develop an overall strategy or plan. It needs to develop and galvanize recognition of the college by the outside community. Possibly the greatest difficulty for outside people in communicating with the school is knowing whom to reach and how to reach them. Colleges and universities themselves are not organized to help outside callers find the resources they seek. Schools need to make this information readily available, and they need to train all persons whom outside callers might potentially reach so that institutional staff can respond knowledgeably and transfer calls to appropriate offices and programs.

MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

When the director of the Office of Economic Development arrived at Murray State University, the university had no previous history of involvement in such activities, and the director, who possessed an extensive background in private business and industry, had no direct experience in helping a university, which serves a region of 30 rural counties in Kentucky, address the needs of its service area which came in the form of requests for assistance. The director had some ideas, but he also desired the input and support of professionals with experience in fostering such interrelationships.

The AASCU RFP arrived about the same time. Involvement in the process helped provide structure for involving the university in the economic development plans of the region. A panel of community, business, financial, and business leaders, as well as professional developers, from a 17-county area, identified both needs and human and financial resources available in the region. Resources include the Southern Kentucky Industrial Development Authority, the Purchase Area Development District , and the professionals serving the various communities which range in size from 3,500 to 15,000.

Meetings with university personnel also proved productive. The normal concern within universities is accreditation, not development, and the reward structure for faculty doesn't include development efforts. The process demonstrated that recognizing such faculty activity is possible, and the faculty has shown interested in such involvement. The AASCU process also provided the opportunity to talk with government leaders. The final report encouraged Murray State to strive to become a leader in regional efforts and to provide support for those plans and activities already underway. The process was not continued because lack of funding due, in part, to decrease in budget revenues.

While the short time-span involved does not allow for a clear delineation of results, there are some hints. 1) A positive effect is a greater general awareness. Because response by faculty to requests for development

assistance doesn't fit the reward system for research and writing, the administration has made a (yet untested) commitment to greater recognition for such service, and the deans demonstrate a heightened awareness of the opportunities provided by regional service. 2) There is an increased awareness within the community of the kind of expertise available at the university. 3) Increased credibility has come to the Office of Economic Development.

Several lessons have been learned. 1) The process has opened eyes to the need to gather information from a broad base of persons--economic, community, and governmental. Economic involvement by the university requires the development of solid base of community, business, and industry leaders with whom university representatives talk on a regular basis. 2) Once linkages are in place, these leaders also call their university contacts. Without such a network, people outside the university don't know how to access the university. Developing a network provides a "window of accessibility"; people in business, industry, and government now feel confident that they have the direct access which can get something done. 3) Persons at the university must respond directly and promptly, "Yes, we can," or "No, we can't," when contacted. These outside leaders can't be left hanging. The effort has to be well managed so that they'll call back even if the university can't help them now.

The participants at Murray State felt that the AASCU process was designed well. It helped with moving the development of an interactive television network beyond an educational function to involvement in economic development. Murray State is a key player in the statewide effort to develop a land-based, compressed video system which will allow face-to-face contact at seven regional sites and allow for the delivery of industrial training, continuing professional education, tele-medicine, and video conferencing for government personnel.

The Office of Economic Development is housed in the Center for Continuing Education and is located physically in the Engineering and Technology building along with telecommunications. This direct access is helpful because Continuing Education works across disciplines and works with all the colleges on campus. Not only does Continuing Education emphasize the development of the Office of Economic Development; the administration is also hearing its concerns and is supportive.

NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Northwestern State University of Louisiana is located in a very rural area where utilities concentrate on industry, not community. Consequently, the AASCU process proved to be a positive experience. 1) People were brought together that the process was intended to bring together. University members became conscious of, and proactive about, economic development, one of the major items in the mission statement of the university; business and community leaders became acquainted with university leaders, thereby establishing acquaintances which have provided ongoing contacts throughout the service region. 2) As a result of the consultation team effort certain activities were undertaken that had not been done previously. Northwestern Louisiana, the only university taking a lead in state-supported programs for rural community development, provides grass-roots involvement and organizational stability for the 10 parishes (of the 64 "counties" in the state) which belong to the Central Louisiana Regional Economic Development Alliance. 3) The small group facilitation approach used by the consultation team for establishing priorities and setting objectives has provided a useful model for subsequent developmental activity in the region.

The report which the consultation team wrote and forwarded after the visit has proved less helpful. Not much was included that the director of the Small Business Development Center at Northwestern Louisiana did not already know. AASCU's Center for Economic and Community Development disbanded shortly after the report was issued and was not able to provide assistance for the next step--the one which Northwestern Louisiana most needed to pursue--namely, initiating the design phase to organize the process for subsequent economic development planning and activities. How does the team make the plan and get the necessary commitment from the university administration? The process was undertaken as an exercise to get to the part that hadn't been done and which needed to be done.

The director of the Small Business Development Center at Northwestern Louisiana makes the following recommendations for colleges and universities interested in becoming a regional leader in economic and community development: 1) include economic development in the institution's mission statement; 2) become involved in economic development summits; 3) foster economic development centers; 4) use the adult, continuing, and community education arm of the university to provide educational and other services to the region.

In theory, the AASCU process is a good idea. Colleges and universities are too geared to academia. They need to make real what they talk about doing--things like improving the quality of life--and emphasize the hands-on, the service aspects of the university's mission. The existence of the Small Business Development Center at Northwestern Louisiana provided the conduit for the university's involvement in regional economic development. The Center knows the community, knows how to use group processes, and possesses business and planning background; what it needed was leadership in developing a plan, a process, for involving all the players.

SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY

The president of Shawnee State, a smaller institution in rural southern Ohio which emphasizes the applied arts and sciences, led the charge in applying for an AASCU grant. The university was pleased with the consulting team and the consultation process. The development of the panel has developed linkages between the university and community leaders from business, education, government, and the Chamber of Commerce. The participants liked the process, were interested, and were willing to work with the university, which is serving as a catalyst in economic development planning for the region. However, although the university did want to follow through on the entire process, it has been unable to secure the necessary monies due to cuts in state funding to Shawnee State. Fiscal restraints have required retrenchment and cuts in personnel; such circumstances make the commitment of funds to new programs difficult.

Although the university hasn't followed through directly on the AASCU process, the university, including its president, has been involved in another development which has taken place partly as a result of the consultation process--the Southern Ohio Growth Partnership (SOGP), with which Shawnee State has shared the AASCU Report. SOGP was formed in an effort to develop cooperation where there was a history of competition, in-fighting, and "doing one's own thing" and to create a unified voice for the Portsmouth Area Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Portsmouth Growth Corporation, and the Scioto [County] Economic Development Corporation.

While there is still keen interest at the university in pursuing the process, its primary involvement in, and outlet for, economic development has been SOGP. 1) Local needs support applied research by university faculty. 2) The Plastics Technology program at the university takes on small production runs which would not be profitable for local companies. 3) Recycling waste from surrounding counties involves several programs besides Plastics Technology:

Engineering Technology, Electronic Computer Technology, and Manufacturing and Computer-Assisted Design. Items (2) and (3) help support local economic development, improve quality of life, and provide hands-on experience for students in these programs. Students are able to apply immediately and directly what they are learning in the classroom. 4) The university is working with local law enforcement officials on the possibility of developing a local site for testing suspected illegal substances. Should this happen, the turn-around time for such testing would be two to three days rather than the current three weeks using existing processes and laboratories. 5) Shawnee State is one of a planned twelve Ohio Technology Transfer Organization (OTTO) locations. Consequently, its faculty serve local industry as consultants and liaisons for the transfer of technology from research and theory to application.

According to the Assistant Vice-President of Academic Affairs, the lessons learned from the AASCU process for economic and community development are the following: 1) The highest level--the president--must buy into the process if it is to be truly meaningful and successful. 2) A specific unit and person(s) must be assigned to, and own, the responsibility for implementing and maintaining the process. At Shawnee State the unit is Continuing Education where two persons are involved primarily in contacts and promotion with business and industry. 3) One meaningful way the university fosters economic development is offering it facilities to the community. Bringing local groups together in university space eases the financial burden on such groups (they don't need to pay for meeting space elsewhere), and people become accustomed to coming to campus. The university is not so mysterious and distant. 4) This is an arena which is a natural for adult, continuing, and community educators. They should want to get involved in local economic and community development both because it is part of the mission and because such involvement expands opportunities for developing and offering growth possibilities.

Although Shawnee State is not presently following through with the AASCU Model, it found the process very useful. Assistance from the outside was good for both the university and the community. The process has produced helpful spin-offs. AASCU needs to continue this type of program.

SUNY-BROCKPORT

The consulting process at the State University of New York College at Brockport (SUNY-Brockport) was considered to be an excellent experience. Not only did it convene players not previously involved, it also helped the school to develop a broadened perspective. Having looked traditionally to the east (the Rochester area), SUNY-Brockport has now expanded its horizons to the west--a much more rural area and one lacking in other resources--as well. This was the major consequence of the process--helping to shape a new focus. The consultation team deserves thanks for that new direction.

Further results of the consultative experience included: 1) providing additional impetus and support to an already active continuing education program; 2) creating the International Institute through a new strategic planning effort which fits all international programs, including the academic emphasis area, under its aegis; and 3) developing the Small Business Development Center (in effect, a small business counseling center), recently transferred to SUNY-Brockport from the community college system, as a developer of planners and developers for rural counties and as a resource to these areas as they devise business plans. AASCU helped SUNY-Brockport examine its previous situation and provided a road map when new alternatives developed, helping the institution switch its emphasis from training to development. The university is concentrating now on helping smaller communities with capacity building. The report of the consulting team helped provide a focus for this new perspective.

The vice president for college relations, who was in charge of SUNY-Brockport's involvement in the process, came to the university as a "marketer." His responsibilities (college relations and development) include the areas of admissions, adult and continuing education, the Business and Industry Center, and international education. He is able to go outside the university for staffing, but he also interfaces with the academic disciplines.

Planning and participating in the AASCU process offered focus and direction; it helped the college see opportunities and avoid distractions; it provided a framework, offered contacts and linkages, and developed awareness and exposure. In fact, the process helped lead the entire SUNY system, through the leadership of Brockport's president, to investigate how campuses can relate to other groups in the pursuit of economic development. The president chairs the central New York region in this endeavor, and his involvement has also developed new contacts for SUNY-Brockport.

The effort has met some resistance. Persons with other agendas fear the diversion of limited resources to economic development efforts. Will such diversion take away from something else? As a result, there is some tension while attempting to keep things going in these new directions.

The final reaction at Brockport: It's too bad that AASCU discontinued the Center for Economic and Community Development. Its director, Lynn Witten, was the prime mover who brought to SUNY-Brockport a process which has expanded the college's own economic development efforts and has turned into a state-wide effort.

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Western Carolina University already had an economic development program in place when it became involved in the AASCU Model Process, but it became involved in this process in order to expand its activities. While bypassing some of the steps, it used the consultation component and found this to be the most substantive of the entire process. The major immediate results were the expansion and development of programs related to the Small Business and Technology Development Center and the International Trade Services (ITS) program: 1) adding an export component to ITS, 2) expanding and varying the institution's annual International Festival by adding economic development components and a career fair, and 3) developing a symposium to serve as a primer for international development for small businesses within a 30-county service area which would like to develop export capabilities. Other activities and projects were already in the planning stages, but the consultation process helped do them better.

The Vice-Chancellor for University Services states that Western Carolina has learned certain lessons or fundamentals for carrying out economic and community development activities. 1) It is necessary for the institution to cultivate a close relationship with a) the State Department of Commerce; b) federal programs, such as the Small Business Administration, and their state-level counterparts; and c) other state and quasi-state agencies. Examples in North Carolina are the Technological Development Authority (which provides support for incubators and administers the Innovative Research Fund), the Micro-Electronic Center, and the Rural Development Center. Many problems, which can result from failing to establish such relationships, can be avoided by establishing contacts and networks before the services of these agencies are needed. 2) It is vital to establish cooperative and collaborative relationships with community and technical colleges in order to determine an appropriate division of labor and single points of contact for business and industry in the

service region. 3) Early on it is necessary to identify as many human resources in the region as possible. Of particular value are retired and semi-retired executives who can provide hands-on assistance, lead workshops, provide counseling, and perform other valuable services in support of local economic development activities.

The Vice-Chancellor makes the following suggestions on how to communicate to the university the importance of becoming involved in the economic and community development of the service region: 1) Make such development a part of the long-range planning of the university. 2) Publicize activities and achievements in university publications. 3) Involve faculty and students directly in economic development projects.

MON VALLEY TRI-STATE NETWORK, INC., AND MON VALLEY TRI-STATE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

While not actually part of the AASCU Model Process, the efforts and activities of the Mon Valley Tri-State Network and the Mon Valley Tri-State Leadership Academy run parallel to those of the eight institutions described above; they provide an example and illustration of the collaborative endeavors which can be undertaken by academic institutions, communities, businesses and industry, and other organizations to encourage positive and proactive efforts to effect development and change in a specific geographic region. "Mon Valley" refers to the Monongahela River basin and encompasses 18 counties in north central West Virginia, southwestern Pennsylvania, and western Maryland. The office of the Network and Leadership Academy is located on the campus of West Virginia University in Morgantown.

Mon Valley Tri-State Network, Inc.

Purpose. The Mon Valley Tri-State Network, an independent, non-profit organization, is a consortium of organizations and individuals who make annual membership contributions. Its publications state that the network's mission is to:

- Provide a focal point of leadership which cares about the region as a whole and forms an effective constituency on its behalf.
- Stimulate new thinking about the Valley's future and define a challenging, long-term vision which can be marketed locally and abroad.
- Search out common goals for developing the region's extraordinary resources.
- Enhance efforts in every part of the Valley to revitalize communities, support existing economic activity, and attract new initiatives through regional leadership and cooperation.

The vision of the Network is to empower these individuals and organizations to

work from within to establish a competitive economy, create and retain jobs, and maintain the quality of life desired by those living in the region. The Network exists to facilitate the collaborative efforts of its members who share a common vision and possess the confidence that they can effect the changes they desire and that their efforts can affect the differences they want for themselves, their children, and their future.

Projects. Projects which the Network has undertaken to foster regional cooperation and leadership include: 1) development of the Leadership Academy, which is described more fully below; 2) creation of a state-of-the-art telecommunications network which links information sources with community leadership and economic development professionals throughout the Mon Valley; 3) formation of a tri-state regional development compact which would allow this interstate region--tied together geographically by a river and an interstate highway; economically by common industries and job patterns; and socially by similar values, support for professional athletic teams, and rivalries at the college and high school levels--to operate as a single entity in promoting the region rather than having to continually work through three different state legislatures; and 4) initiatives in area-wide marketing, jobs stabilization, riverfront development, transportation, recreation and tourism, and related issues and areas of common concern and interest.

Support. Although colleges and universities would seem to be the logical place for sponsoring the development of such a network, such was not the case. The reward structure for faculty advancement and tenure does not support involvement in local and regional economic development activities. Research arms of universities and research activities of faculty pursue projects which will attract recognition and enhance reputations. Local and regional community and economic development don't provide these kinds of opportunities and results. However, West Virginia University, as a land grant institution, has assisted in a variety of ways: housing the operation, subsidizing the Network through in-kind support, and providing the Cooperative Extension Service to help get the Academy started. The Network itself is supported by its membership, meaning that the Network must constantly market itself to the economic, community, commercial, financial, and cultural interests of the region. The Network includes in its scope economic development, human resource development, quality of life, water use and management, and transportation and

delves into projects and activities which are supportive of any or all of these emphasis areas, one of which has been electronic telecommunications.

Mon Valley Tri-State Leadership Academy

A study that was done for the Network identified as a priority leadership training for economic and organizational development. This led to the creation of the Mon Valley Tri-State Leadership Academy, a collaborative effort by nine participating colleges and universities: West Virginia University and Fairmont State College in West Virginia; Frostburg State University and Allegany and Garrett County Community Colleges in Maryland; and The Pennsylvania State University, the University of Pittsburgh, Waynesburg College, Washington and Jefferson College, and California University of Pennsylvania in Pennsylvania. In response to a proposal for funds to underwrite the establishment of the Academy, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation committed $774,000 for that purpose. The Academy supports the philosophy of the Network by training leaders in the various communities and empowering them to take the initiative in developing both local and regional projects. Typically, these projects emphasize maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the Mon Valley region.

Purpose. The Academy's purpose is to equip its graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary to become more effective leaders who have a vision of the future which extends beyond their immediate communities or counties. People currently involved in grass-roots economic, human, and community development throughout the Mon Valley can take giant strides in breaking down barriers and opening up possibilities for cooperative regional development by participating in the Academy. The Academy was conceived with a primary focus on <u>regional</u>, rather than on local, economic development, the focus undergirding the execution of the plan which has been developed to guide the operation of the Academy.

Curriculum. The Academy is built on both a curriculum and a process. The curriculum includes four, 30-hour modules of study: Overview of Leadership and Economics in the Mon Valley, Individual Leadership, Organizational Leadership, and Application of Leadership Skills and Concepts. The curriculum is structured so that each session and module builds toward an emphasis on regional goals. The initial courses are being taught at three sites: Morgantown, WV; Washington, PA; and Grantsville, MD. Courses are taught by

faculty teams composed of successful community leaders, chief executives from Valley businesses, public agency executives, economic development practitioners, and faculty from the Valley's colleges and universities.

Process. The process is the planning and implementation of hands-on development projects which help participants to take a broader, regional perspective and see everyone in the tri-state region as a potential partner. Rather than looking on another community's gain as a loss for one's own community, participants will come to understand and realize that each local advance is also an advance for the region. Persons who before had worked only in local communities now are interested in working with two other states on regional projects. The last module in the Academy's curriculum will assist these "paradigm shifts of perception" by incorporating the philosophy of the network for regional development and using teams of people from the three states to develop a telecommunications data base which participants can use for searching out information and in communicating with each other.

Team building, then, is a part of the process. Participants, meeting at three different sites, now want to get together and share ideas. After completing the modules, they can join a network committee to continue working until their projects are completed. Such cooperative philosophy, processes, and efforts are not unlike those used at Highlander (Tennessee), which has been recommended to the Academy as a model. Highlander has been noted for its successes in helping labor and civil rights leaders, among others, learn how to delineate issues, problems, and possible solutions; to identify and appreciate the personal, human, and material resources available to them; and to marshall these resources in addressing the problems and issues they have identified and for working toward commonly accepted goals and solutions. Such an approach would follow the suggestion of President Clinton who stated that we can no longer expect to get something for nothing. Just as we have to pay to work our way out of the deficit, so we have to get people to commit to the idea of regional development. The natural tendency for local leaders is to wait and see if the network works before they commit to it. The task is to help them see that it will work only if they make the commitment up front and accept responsibility for making it work.

Projects. Examples of projects which have been proposed by participants at the Washington, PA, site include an adult literacy service,

abandoned housing in the community, riverfront development, bridge housing for women in crisis, an affordable housing corporation, policy prescriptions for service consolidation to enhance regional planning and development, restoration and re-use of a factory in a historical district, and a program that matches prospective purchasers of goods and services with women-owned businesses. Participants at the Garrett County, MD, site have proposed the following projects: establishment of an indoor recreation center, construction of a large-scale recreational/hydro dam, implementation of a Total Quality Management program into a small manufacturing environment, a long-term Health Care Strategy in Western Maryland, construction of a sewer system, a course/ curriculum for the start-up entrepreneur, starting an "adventure sports" tour packaging business, locational and format changes in a sporting goods store, and adding to a chain of hardware stores. Morgantown, WV, participants are involved in the following projects: converting a mall into a specialized clothing outlet, developing plans to expand and build a hangar on a private airport, creating a group home for persons with disabilities, developing a child care center for working parents, developing recreational trails (which may, in turn, bring in a bed and breakfast, campgrounds, gas stations, hotels and motels, eateries, rentals of equipment, shuttle services, and fund raising events), providing cutting edge consumer and business consulting, developing a retirement community, and small business development.

Summary. Key words and ideas which describe and underlie the philosophy of the network and the Academy are *regional, synergistic,* and *broad vision and mission.* Having a wider vision helps at both the local, community level and the regional level, but concentrating on the local level fails to see possible support from, and contributions to, the region. The goal is to tap into the full range of ages, experience, national heritage, and cultural diversity resident in the Mon Valley. Mary P. Andrews, Co-Director of the Rural American Cluster Evaluation Project, commissioned at Michigan State University by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, provides an apt summary and conclusion to this section: "The Academy and the Network have become windows of opportunity for the region. Everyone is accepting the challenge that now is the time to do something."

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

All of the institutions described in this report, except for the Mon Valley Tri-State Network and Leadership Academy, had applied, in response to an RFP, to be part of the AASCU Model Process designed by its Center for Economic and Community Development. All eight colleges and universities completed the first two steps of the process: 1) each performed an institutional self-assessment, and 2) each designed a planning process which involved bringing together key institutional (internal) and community (external) decision makers; working with a consulting team, sent by AASCU, made up of Lynn Witten, who directed the Center for Economic and Community Development, and one other trained consultant; and receiving a report from the consulting team which outlined the team's findings and which included recommendations for further action. The reactions, highlighted in this report and summarized here, varied from very positive to mixed.

Responses to the AASCU Process

The consulting process itself--which brought together the key decision makers for a round of interactive panel and group process sessions to share perceptions, list current activities, identify resources, and establish goals for new and additional collaborative activity between the educational institution and the community--received consistently high marks. Respondent after respondent gave high praise to Lynn Witten for her professionalism, her expertise, and her handling of the process.

The same cannot be said for the report, the contents of which were seen by most (but not all) respondents as restating what was already known to those who would be responsible for shepherding the process through the remaining six steps. The institutions had collected and submitted a considerable amount of material which they hoped the consultants would study and analyze. The participants perceived the reports to concentrate less on explicating insights

and possibilities for new directions than they did on encouraging the schools to continue with AASCU process.

None of these eight schools have continued the process. Several reasons can be cited for its cessation:

1. The most common reason given was finances. The cost of completing the process was consistently seen as a deterrent. Although the cost estimate given by AASCU was not necessarily exorbitant, several of the institutions involved have been faced with decreased budget revenues from their respective states. Even where involvement in the economic and community development of the service region has been given high priority and visible support, there has been difficulty in defending expenditure on a design process such as that proposed by AASCU.
2. The demise of AASCU's Center for Economic and Community Development was also cited as at least a secondary reason for lack of continuation. Although no one said so straight out, there appeared to be a certain undercurrent of sentiment: If AASCU is not committed to the process--if AASCU sees this as a place to cut--why should the various institutions continue the process on their own? Several questions can be raised: Why did AASCU drop the Center and drop out of the process? Would continued AASCU support have improved the financial commitment of and to the various institutions? Would the institutions have continued the process if AASCU had continued its support? Would AASCU's continuing the process have produced different results than those which have currently been attained?
3. For some, the answer to the last three questions would be, "No." Local goals had been met by participating in the first two steps of the process. Several of the schools would not have continued even with on-going support from AASCU. In most cases, these are the same schools which felt that the report of the consulting team provided no new information or insights. They valued the consulting process; they were then ready to continue on their own.

This does not mean, however, that these eight schools have ceased their involvement in the economic and community development activities in their service region. As the descriptions in this report indicate, all eight are quite involved--some extensively so. In fact, one could surmise that strong interest,

and even actual involvement, in local and regional developmental activities prompted these institutions to respond to the AASCU RFP in the first place. Certainly these institutions are involved in a great many developmental projects, and the AASCU process has led some institutions to find new and different forms of involvement in their service regions.

The institutions involved valued the consultation process because it got community, business, and government leaders together with leaders in the educational institutions; contacts have been made, networks developed, and two-way communication established. The process helped get the colleges and universities directed outward; they are contributing to the overall quality of life in their regions and making their campuses more accessible.

Findings: Problem Areas for Continuing Educators

Community perceptions. This last observation highlights a key result of the process: leaders of the schools came to understand that their colleges and universities are well-kept secrets in their service areas. The buildings are visible, but community leaders don't see much there to which they can relate. Beside the economic benefits of providing employment, especially staff and service positions, and purchasing goods and services--a contribution to the community which the schools could do a better job of emphasizing--institutions need to examine every program and activity within the school to determine the external as well as internal potential of such programs and activities. Each school contains a tremendous storehouse of potential expertise, service, and training for the organizations, businesses, and industry of the service region.

Even when community leaders have attempted to access university resources, they have been frustrated. They do not know whom to contact on campus, and those receiving calls are often unable or unwilling to help. Internal efforts are necessary to train those most likely to receive incoming queries: 1) Recipients must know where to direct calls for the best chance of a positive and helpful response. 2) All faculty and staff must learn how to handle such calls. 3) Service to the community needs to be given such a high priority that all administrators, faculty, and staff will automatically respond in a courteous manner. Another easy step--one already taken by some of the institutions involved in this study--is to make the college's buildings and services more readily available and accessible to community and business groups.

Faculty reward system. Several other problematic areas have been highlighted by respondents during this study. One is the faculty reward system. Economic and community development activities are not recognized as legitimate activities in most promotion and tenure procedures. Emphasis is placed primarily on research activities within an academic discipline. Although service to university and community is listed as contributing to advancement, common wisdom says that this really isn't so. "Publish or perish," still very strong on most campuses, discourages rather than encourages faculty participation in local developmental activities. Conscious and extensive efforts must be made to alter the reward system if campus leaders, truly committed to making a difference in their service regions, want to tap the ready pool of expertise which is already at their fingertips.

The role of continuing education units. Another difficulty is the role of the continuing education unit in local and regional community and economic development. This unit has been, historically, the point of contact with the outside world. Consequently, it oftentimes has become the focal point for any developmental efforts in which the college or university might become involved. Yet, because the continuing education unit is usually viewed as marginal--that is, it is seen primarily as a source of income for the school, and its activities are not viewed as an integral part of the mission of the college or university--its involvement in local and regional development efforts is also seen as marginal and not central to the mission of the institution. Rather than viewing involvement in local development and quality of life issues as central to the mission and purpose of the institution, such involvement is seen as something done over in continuing education which has little bearing or affect on what happens in the academic mainstream.

Higher education's responsibility. A third area of concern has been highlighted by David Harrison, executive director of the Mon Valley Tri-State Network. He points out that state institutions, historically, have seen themselves as the recipients of state funds without any reciprocal responsibility for either generating new funds or increasing the revenue of the state in some way. There is a growing realization that higher education must play a role in the survival of the state by giving something back to the state--something more direct than "merely" the development of tomorrow's productive citizens. In order to maintain and receive a decent level of funding, higher education will have to

contribute to the state coffers in some way. While there is some sense of this responsibility in land grant institutions, development of such awareness among state-supported schools still requires considerable attention.

Recommendations for Continuing Educators

The following recommendations for colleges and universities who want to become involved in the community and economic development of their service regions can be drawn from the interviews with respondents:

1. Make involvement in community and economic development--or the larger context, quality of life issues--an integral part of the school's mission and purpose. The strategic plan should include programs, activities, and endeavors with an outward as well as an inward focus.
2. Support external involvement organizationally by charging a high-level administrator with this function and make that person directly responsible for the development of such programs, activities, and endeavors.
3. Support such involvement financially. This calls for up-front commitment. Involvement in community and economic development should not be viewed primarily in terms of the economic benefits to the school (for example, by placing primary responsibility for such involvement in the continuing education unit and then expecting continuing education to produce a profit for the university through its participation in such external activities). Rather, in keeping with the mission, vision, and strategic plan, involvement should be seen in terms of what the school can do for the community. Ultimately, the financial return will be there, but the early financial commitment must be seen as a necessary investment with the payoff being the positive regard for the school by the community.
4. Encourage, recognize, and reward faculty, department, and program involvement in local and regional community and economic development activities. Regard such participation on the part of faculty as legitimate professional activity by rewarding it in the advancement process and by providing appropriate staffing and financial support to departments and programs willing to become involved with their service region.

The key question becomes: What is the strength of the institution's commitment? Is it "in the bones," or is it only of interest if it produces income for the college or university? The attitude and commitment of the school will be

quickly assessed by the community, business, and governmental leaders, and they will respond accordingly.

Further Observations and Questions

A final set of observations relates to the participating schools. Why did these institutions, but not others, become involved in the process? Are there common characteristics among the participating schools? The most obvious commonality is that all but one institution serve primarily rural areas or include rural areas in their service region. The one exception is a school in an urban area with very low economic indicators. Thus all areas served would seem to share certain traits: low levels of business and industry development and growth, low levels of income, lack of employment opportunities, and the like. Beside economic factors, why mostly rural areas? Does population make a difference in the self-perception or self-awareness of the institution's potential role in, and contribution to, its region? Do schools in urban areas not see themselves as leaders in economic development, or do they see or think that such activity is already being done adequately? In other words, do schools in rural America see themselves as more visible in their regions than do schools in urban and suburban areas?

None of the schools participating in the AASCU process are large (when compared to the "name" schools), and none are land-grant institutions. Beyond that, the search for common factors begins to falter. Geographically, all eight are east of the Rockies; all but two are east of the Mississippi--and a seventh is in a state through which that river runs. Four are located in states which made up the original 13 colonies, and four are located in the historically industrial north and northeast regions of the country (three schools are common to both these designations). Does history and the age of the region play a role in determining why these eight and not others? Are schools in the West and Southwest already involved because there has been a difference in the dynamics of past and present development of these regions? Or is it just a matter of numbers--there are many more colleges and universities east of the Rockies? Such questions, obviously, are difficult, if not impossible to answer. It's much easier to discover reasons for participation that reasons for non-participation. However, there are some potential areas for further investigation. These are highlighted in the next section.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Little research has been conducted into the quality of continuing higher educators' leadership role in economic and community development planning. Investigations along the following lines would alleviate that deficit.

A. Conduct surveys at the state, the regional, and the national level to catalog the current involvement of higher education institutions in the economic and community development of their service areas.
   a. Who is involved by type of institution (2-year, 4-year, and/or graduate institution; public, private, religious, land grant, etc.)?
   b. What are institutions so involved doing (types and descriptions of projects and activities)?
   c. How are they conducting these projects and activities (models)?

B. Investigate the role of economic development within the framework and structure of the institution.
   1. Do/how do such activities fit within and relate to the mission statement and purposes of the school? What is the relationship to the academic and research functions of the institution? What is the organizational placement (who in the administrative hierarchy is responsible)? Another way of asking the question is: How marginal or how central to the school's operation is involvement in economic development? How, and how much, are all levels (administrators, faculty, and staff) of the institution involved?
   2. What attitudes about the institution's involvement in local economic and community development are held by a) local community, business, and governmental leaders and b) college and university personnel--administrators, faculty, and staff (each studied as a separate group)?
   3. From whence does leadership for collaboration need to come? What models and strategies work best? Is collaboration, often espoused philosophical with little research support, always the best approach?

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